

Proposed Ethnic Studies Framework August 2015

The California History and Social Science Frameworks discuss the importance of cultural/ethnic studies in deepening students' understanding of the evolving American society and its diverse cultural makeup. Ethnic Studies is a multicultural high school elective exploring the largest minority groups in America, including their cultures and contributions. At the intersection of social sciences and anthropology, students trace the history of ethnic groups from their national origins. Through this, they understand the challenges and triumphs resulting from cultural, socioeconomic and political forces to their current status in the United States while analyzing race relations. High schoolers learn about different cultural systems within their communities and beyond, which engages them in higher-order critical thinking and college-level analysis. Lessons in ethnic studies should help students develop acceptance and respect for cultural diversity in America and beyond.

Ethnic Studies focuses on themes of social justice, social responsibility, and social change while exploring the good, the bad, and the ugly of human society. The course spans from past to present, from politics to social reform, allowing students to gain a larger perspective of the diversity of American history. Students also identify similar social patterns and universal qualities present in other societies, including their own. They grapple with the questions: "What is my universe of obligation? Who do I identify with? How do others perceive us, and how do we perceive them? What is a just society? How can we all live in a democratic society based on trust? How can we maintain a unified society and still sustain our individual identity? Who are the in-crowd and who is the other?"

Throughout the year, students deepen their understandings of the different facets of justice; and, resulting from it, social responsibility and social change. They understand how justice and injustice is intertwined with the roots of their own individual history, as well as the shaping of their community and the world they live in. What are the major racial problems we confront today? What are the causes of the problems and what are the potential solutions? Consider what human nature is and what motivates us to do what we do? Is there a "good Samaritan law"?

Students analyze and interpret a variety of documents: letters, biographies, primary sources from pinnacle historic events that are often glossed over in history textbooks. Through this, students develop their own understandings of the ethnic groups' experiences across the globe. As students navigate through thought-provoking lessons, they gain cultural understanding, which is vital in our pluralistic society. Along with reading, the course emphasizes writing skills and project-based learning, working collaboratively and holding group discussions. This series of lessons allows them to trace their family lineage and examine how forces of history and geography have brought them to California, and identify traits that make them uniquely American.